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Thursday

DECEMBER 18, 2003

Ryan Indicted: Former Ill. governor charged in payoffs | 3

French Fight: Chirac backs limits on religious symbols | 5

SE Shooting: 6-year-old gunned down on sidewalk | 7



TRADE TROUBLE: The baseball players union has thrown a wrench into Boston's planned trade for Alex Rodriguez. **Sports** | Page 9

Weekend
PASS



>> 13-20

Weather > Partly Sunny



42 | 28

FULL FORECAST ON PAGE 22

AVIATION | NOT QUITE WRIGHT



BOB JORDAN/AP

SPLASHDOWN: The world's most accurate reproduction of the 1903 Wright Flyer never got off the ground before skidding to a muddy halt Wednesday in Kill Devil Hills, N.C. President Bush was among those gathered for a ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight.

Troops Hunt Militants

U.S. forces step up search for pro-Saddam insurgents

SAMARRA, IRAQ | U.S. troops blasted down the gates of homes and smashed in doors of workshops and junkyards in a massive raid Wednesday to hunt for pro-Saddam Hussein militants and stamp out the increasingly bold anti-U.S. resistance.

The raid targeted the city of Samarra, north of Baghdad, where U.S. officials say some 1,500 fighters operate — making it one of the persistent hotspots in the so-called "Sunni Triangle."

The coalition scored a major victory Saturday by nabbing Saddam, who Iraqi

officials revealed Wednesday was being held in the Baghdad area. But violence has continued in the capital and in predominantly Sunni areas west and north of Baghdad, once Saddam's power base.

In the Samarra raid by some 2,500 troops, the 4th Infantry Division and Iraqi forces detained at least a dozen suspected guerrillas — though others got away, apparently tipped off about the raid.

With Saddam in custody, the most wanted Iraqi fugitive is Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a high-ranking member of the former regime thought to be organizing anti-U.S. attacks. But it was unclear whether U.S. officials think al-Douri is in the Samarra area. ALEKSANDAR VASOVIC (AP)

Hinckley Granted Unsupervised Trips

WASHINGTON | A federal judge ruled Wednesday that the man who shot President Reagan may visit his parents without staff from the mental hospital where he has lived for more than two decades.

U.S. District Judge Paul L. Friedman granted John Hinckley Jr.'s request over the objections of the Reagan family and the federal government. However, he attached strict conditions and rejected Hinckley's request to travel to his parents' home in Williamsburg, Va.

Hinckley, 48, was acquitted in 1982 by reason of insanity in the shootings of Reagan, press secretary James Brady and two law enforcement officers. Hinckley said he shot Reagan to impress actress Jodie Foster. (AP)

CONTESTS | Unload Your Fruitcake There are some people who really want your holiday fruitcake. And they promise to eat it, too. Buffalo, N.Y., is hosting the National Fruitcake Round Up. On Dec. 30, some of the biggest eaters around will



compete in a fruitcake-eating contest. They'll have to wolf down as many fruitcakes as they can in just 12 minutes. Organizers say there could be as many as 100,000 neglected fruitcakes in the country. (AP) **EyeOpeners** | Page 2

EyeOpeners

ANIMAL WATCH

Panda Pride

He looks a little sheepish now, but this panda's got the soul of a rocker—or at least a name created by one. The San Diego Zoo unveiled the name of its newest giant panda cub after much fanfare on Tuesday. The name, Mei Sheng, translates to "Born in the USA," after the Bruce Springsteen tune. The 4-month-old cub's name had been a closely held secret, according to Reuters. Mei Sheng is the second giant panda cub born at the San Diego Zoo and the first in the Western Hemisphere since 1999. (EXPRESS)



FOOD

A Coffee Conspiracy?

One choosy mom didn't choose Jif. But when Mary Rickard of Martinsburg, W.Va., opened a can labeled Maxwell House coffee Tuesday, the container was full of creamy peanut butter instead. Her son examined the 34.5-ounce coffee container and found a 4-

pound Jif jar wedged inside the otherwise empty coffee can. Officials of both Jif and Kraft Foods, which owns the Maxwell House brand, are investigating the mix-up. Kraft does not manufacture any brands of peanut butter. Jif produces peanut butter only in Lexington, Ky., and Kraft has no operations center in that city. (AP)

TRAVEL

A Stimulating Vacation

If you're young, healthy and, above all, virile, you could have a trip to Australia in your future. Men at the University of Calgary in Canada are being offered a free two-week Australian getaway—in exchange for their sperm. The Reproductive Medicine Clinic in Aubrey, Australia, started the program after a law was enacted say-

ing sperm donors can no longer remain anonymous, the Canadian Press reports. The clinic will cover the donors' plane fare, accommodations and travel expenses as an incentive. The imported donors can't have their identities shielded either, but would have no legal responsibilities for any children, the CP says. Clinic officials say they've had 15 inquiries so far. (EXPRESS)

HEARSAY | STEERED

"Looking at hamburger meat ... is not the same as looking at that face."

— DOROTHY DAVIES

ON A STEER THAT FLED A SLAUGHTER-HOUSE AND WANDERED DETROIT BEFORE BEING CAPTURED. THE STEER IS NOW BEING DONATED TO DAVIES'S ANIMAL SANCTUARY.

REUTERS



TOYS

Posable Prisoner

Those irrepressible toymakers at Herobuilders.com sure move fast. From the people who brought you the "Governator" doll modeled after new Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger comes the latest news-themed stocking-stuffer: Saddam Hussein, the captive. The 12-inch doll's ace of spades shirt refers to the deposed Iraqi leader's place in the U.S. military's deck of most-wanted Iraqis cards. Despite his buff build, it's likely this Saddam can also be captured without a fight. (EXPRESS)

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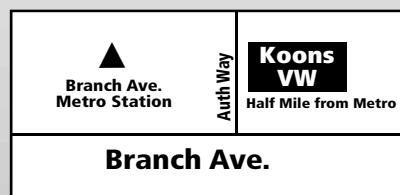


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CAREFUL RESCUE: West Virginia State Police Senior Trooper M.R. Camden, bottom, cradles the injured driver of a military cargo truck that was involved in a crash on Interstate 79 between Morgantown and Fairmont, W.Va., on Wednesday. The truck driver's condition was not known at press time.

BOB GAY/THE DOMINION POST/AP

Church Mortgages Buildings to Pay Abuse Settlements

BOSTON | The sex scandal in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston has shaken the church almost literally to its foundations.

To help pay the \$85 million settlement reached with more than 500 victims of child-molesting priests, the archdiocese has mortgaged its

very seat of power — the Cathedral of the Holy Cross — and is putting up for sale the archbishop's residence, a mansion that was a symbol of the church's grandeur and authority. Dozens of churches are also expected to be closed in a move at least accelerated by the scandal.

Some of these steps were almost unthinkable just a year ago, when Cardinal Bernard Law was in charge. The archdiocese resisted selling property to settle abuse claims before Law finally resigned as archbishop amid fierce criticism of his handling of the sex allegations. (AP)

Ex-Governor Indicted in Probe

George Ryan of Illinois charged with taking payoffs for contracts

CHICAGO | Former Illinois Gov. George Ryan was indicted Wednesday on federal charges of taking payoffs, gifts and vacations in return for government contracts and leases while he was governor and secretary of state.

Ryan, 69, a Republican known worldwide as a leading critic of the death penalty, gradually became the focus of a corruption investigation that began even before his 1998 election as governor. The scan-

dal was a factor in his 2001 decision not to seek a second term.

Ryan, who served as secretary of state from 1991 to 1999, has said he knew there was a culture of corruption in the secretary of state's office but was unaware of the specifics.

The indictment alleges that for more than a decade Ryan let his friends wield great influence in state government and profit from his positions as secretary of state and governor. Ryan allegedly allowed some of his friends, who were not state



Ryan

employees, to steer state contracts in return for bribes and gave others insider information that they could profit from, while ignoring complaints of wrongdoing.

In return, the indictment alleges, Ryan and his family received illegal cash payments, gifts, vacations and personal services from his friends and associates. The indictment did not list a dollar figure for Ryan, but said members of his family got cash loans and gifts totaling \$167,000.

Timothy Rooney, a partner of Ryan defense attorney Dan K. Webb, said there would be no immediate comment but that a statement would be released. MIKE ROBINSON (AP)

HEARSAY | RACE

"[I] certainly never did like that he was a segregationist, but there was nothing I could do about it."

—ESSIE MAE WASHINGTON-WILLIAMS
AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN, DISCUSSING HER FATHER, THE LATE SEN. STROM THURMOND, ONCE A PROponent OF SEGREGATION.

Democrats' Campaign Brawl Hits N.H. Airwaves

WASHINGTON | The political ad wars intensified as three Democratic presidential candidates launched commercials in New Hampshire this week and debate simmered over an ad that uses Osama bin Laden to criticize front-runner Howard Dean.

In 30-second ads, Joe Lieberman claims his record shows he has integrity, John Edwards showcases his plan to crack down on corporations and Wesley Clark says he has the strategy for success in Iraq — echoing themes each has embraced on the campaign trail.

The three candidates are competing in the Granite State's Jan. 27 primary. In all, the Democratic presidential candidates have spent more than \$3 million on advertising aimed to reach New Hampshire voters.

A New Hampshire poll released Wednesday by television stations WMUR in Manchester and WCVB in Boston shows Dean having the support of 46 percent of likely voters and Sen. John Kerry with 17 percent. Clark, Lieberman and Edwards trailed them. LIZ SIDOTI (AP)

Campaign trail: Washingtonpost.com's Terry Neal takes your questions on the 2004 political field | Today at 1 p.m. at washingtonpost.com/liveonline

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4 | EXPRESS | 12.18.2003 | THURSDAY

Nation

U.S. Inks Free Trade Deal

Plan will ease flow of goods with 4 Central American countries

WASHINGTON | Overcoming a last-minute snag on textiles, the United States reached a free trade agreement on Wednesday with four Central American countries.

Negotiators reached agreement in all areas, including textiles and agriculture, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced at a news conference with the trade

ministers of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras.

A fifth nation, Costa Rica, abruptly left the talks on Tuesday complaining about excessive demands being made by the United States for the nation to open up its market to foreign competition in telecommunications and insurance.

However, U.S. officials expressed hope that the differences with Costa Rica can be resolved so that it will be included when the administration submits the Central American Free Trade Agreement, or CAFTA,

to Congress early next year.

The free trade deal covering Central America has stirred strong opposition among U.S. sugar cane and sugar beet farmers, who fear competition from lower-priced Central American sugar, and from the U.S. textile industry, which is concerned that the deal will open the beleaguered industry to even more foreign competition.

The deal will phase out virtually all trade barriers among the participating countries over the next decade. MARTIN CRUTSINGER (AP)

COMMEMORATION | IN FLIGHT



A PLANE OF THEIR OWN: Fourth graders at Roosevelt Elementary School in Middletown, Ohio, throw gliders they made during a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight on Wednesday.

In Brief

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Shot Fired at House Related To Area Highway Shootings

Investigators on Wednesday linked a shot fired at a house to a series of 15 other shootings along a highway. No one was injured in the shooting Monday, the third shooting since Nov. 25, when a woman was shot to death in a car on Interstate 270 south of the city. No one else has been hurt in the string of shootings that began in May. (AP)

JACKSONVILLE, FLA. Web Site Can Keep Stories About Accused Serial Killer

A judge has refused to order a Florida newspaper to remove information about an accused serial killer from its Web site. Lawyers for Paul Durousseau had asked a judge to stop the Florida Times-Union from posting the material online, saying it would prevent their client from receiving a fair trial. But in his ruling Tuesday, Circuit Judge John Skinner said, "I don't think there's anything I can do. Even if I did, it would be up on 2,300 other Web sites already."

Skinner also said Tuesday he wouldn't order the paper to stop publishing stories about the case. (AP)

SYRACUSE, N.Y. Man Sentenced to 25 Years In Prison for Burning Temple

An Arab man who was convicted of hate crimes for burning down a Jewish temple three years ago was sentenced Wednesday to 25 years in prison. Raussi Uthman, 30, also must pay \$856,278 in restitution. No one was injured in the fire at Temple Beth El in Syracuse, which caused more than \$700,000 in damage. (AP)

In Brief

SAUDI ARABIA

Citing Terrorist Threats, U.S. Urges Citizens to Leave

Nonessential American diplomats and the families of all U.S. officials in Saudi Arabia should leave because of "the potential for further terrorist activities," the State Department said Wednesday. No single specific threat led to the department's action, said a U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on condition of anonymity. There are some 200 to 300 non-essential U.S. officials and family members in Saudi Arabia, and about 30,000 U.S. citizens in all. (AP)

PAKISTAN

Limo's High-Tech Equipment Helped President Avoid Bomb

High-tech jamming devices saved Pakistan's president from an assassination attempt, delaying by a few crucial seconds the detonation of a bomb that targeted his motorcade, intelligence officials said Wednesday. President Gen. Pervez Musharraf was riding in a limousine through the city of Rawalpindi when the blast occurred Sunday evening, ripping through a concrete bridge just after he crossed it. (AP)

TAIWAN

Man, 44, Contracts SARS; First Case in Five Months

Taiwan reported its first SARS case in five months on Wednesday — a scientist who allegedly ignored World Health Organization safety rules and worked with spilled virus samples without wearing a protective gown and gloves, officials said. Authorities did not identify the 44-year-old man. (AP)

TURKEY

Bin Laden Reportedly Urged Militants to Hit U.S. Base

Osama bin Laden proposed attacking a Turkish military base used by the United States, but militants stymied by tight security bombed civilian targets instead, killing Muslims and upsetting al Qaeda leaders, Turkish officials said. The information came from interrogations of a top suspect in last month's deadly bombings in Istanbul that authorities believe were carried out by Turkish militants trained by al Qaeda in Afghanistan, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity. (AP)

Iraqis Mull Saddam's Trial

Governing Council debates how to select judges

BAGHDAD, IRAQ | Amid concerns of international human rights groups, Iraq's U.S.-appointed Governing Council met for the first time to look into ways of appointing judges to a new war crimes tribunal that could try Saddam Hussein.

A committee of highly qualified lawyers could recommend candidates to be judges on the tribunal, which will try former members of Saddam's regime for human rights abuses stretching back decades, said Mouwafak al-Rubaie, a Shiite physician and longtime human rights

activist who serves on the council.

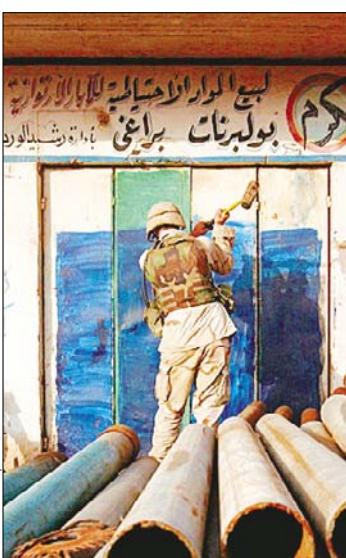
Saddam was captured on Saturday, and some Governing Council members say they want to try him within months. However, he is in U.S. custody and the timeline and format of a possible trial has yet to be established.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- In the northern city of Mosul, assailants shot and killed a policeman Wednesday, police said.
- Also in Mosul, Iraqi security forces fired on pro-Saddam protest-

ers, injuring nine, witnesses said.

- In Baghdad, a fuel truck exploded after colliding with a bus at an intersection, killing 10 Iraqis. U.S. officials said the blast was an accident, not an attack. (AP)



A U.S. soldier in search of insurgents and weapons tries to break the padlock of a store in Samarra on Wednesday.

The shadowy overseers of the insurgency maintain communications with cells made up of a core of about 5,000 anti-U.S. guerrillas, who, in turn, have recruited thousands of part-time fighters from Iraq's mosques and its vast pool of unemployed and angry citizens, the official said.

The senior official said intelligence analysts are hoping to use documents seized during Saturday's capture of Saddam Hussein "to get better clarity" about the guerrilla movement. JIM KRANE (AP)

Following leads: Top commander of U.S. forces says capture of Saddam has given authorities valuable insight into the Iraqi resistance | Today's Post: Section A

U.S. Believes Insurgency Is Centrally Planned

BAGHDAD, IRAQ | The Iraqi insurgency is showing signs of central planning by former officials of Saddam Hussein's regime — figures who coordinate strikes hundreds of miles apart and provide cash and bomb-making expertise to guerrilla cells, a senior U.S. military official said Wednesday.

In some cases, "signature bombs" are used, devices so similar their design suggests they came from the same source, the official said.

Central coordination can also be seen in the anti-U.S. or pro-Saddam demonstrations that crop up simultaneously in cities across the country, the official said.

Grievances Aired on Third Day Of Afghan Constitutional Council

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | Afghanistan's constitutional council erupted in chaos Wednesday, with one delegate denouncing her colleagues as "criminals" and others threatening to walk out.

The constitutional council is being billed as an opportunity to shape a new and democratic system for this war-ravaged land. It is also a powder-keg of factionalism.

The council's morning session began with a scathing speech by Malalai Joya, a female delegate, who

decried the positions of influence given to faction leaders.

"Why have you again selected as committee chairmen those criminals who have brought these disasters for the Afghan people?" shouted an angry Joya.

Other delegates accused the government of trying to force them to accept a presidential system, which they say could give too much power to U.S.-backed President Hamid Karzai. Several threatened a walkout over the issue. PAUL HAVEN (AP)



Elsewhere in Kabul on Wednesday, Canadian soldiers handed out nearly 2,000 Christmas boxes for Afghan children to take back to their refugee camp in the city.

Battle Over Secularism In France

Chirac wants to ban all religious symbols from public schools

PARIS | Despite protests from religious leaders, France must outlaw Islamic head coverings, Jewish skullcaps and other obvious religious signs in schools and regulate them in the workplace, President Jacques Chirac announced Wednesday.

Such action, the French president said in a televised national address, is needed to reaffirm France's secular foundations. He rejected the model of integration where ethnic communities guard their customs and separateness.

"I refuse to let France take that path. It would sacrifice its heritage. It would compromise its future. It would lose its soul," Chirac said.

Chirac called on parliament, where his conservative government has a majority, to pass a law banning such religious signs ahead of the school year that starts in September 2004.

Less expected than his proposed law governing schools — and possibly more contentious because of its potential scope — was Chirac's proposal for the workplace.

Business leaders should be allowed to "regulate the wearing of religious signs" for safety reasons and for dealing with clients, Chirac said. JOHN LEICESTER (AP)

World

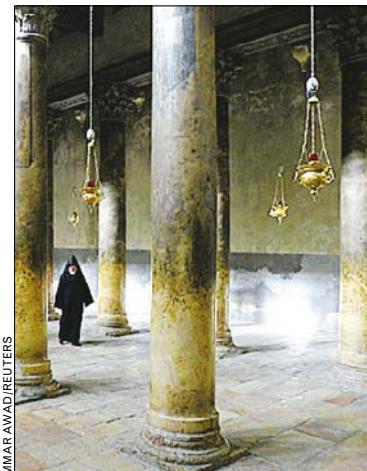
Sharon's New Tack Splits Party

Likud divided over prospect of taking unilateral action

JERUSALEM | A day before a major policy address by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, his ruling party appeared bitterly divided Wednesday over proposals that Israel withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza even without negotiating with the Palestinians.

Sharon has spoken in recent weeks of taking unspecified unilateral action if peace efforts fail. Officials have said his proposals could include withdrawing from parts of the West Bank and Gaza and exiting Jewish settlements in the areas evacuated.

This talk has set off an impas-



ANMAR AWAD/REUTERS
A priest walks in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which faces another gloomy Christmas amid continuing violence.

sioned debate within the Likud Party, which historically has been committed to Jewish control over the biblical land of Israel, an area that includes the West Bank. It has also upset the Palestinians and the United States, who both say that a peace settlement must be reached through negotiations.

JOSEF FEDERMAN (AP)



BY THE NUMBERS: In an attempt to clean up its image, the European Parliament voted to curb questionable payouts to its members as part of a new system that would set a salary of about \$10,500 for each member. (AP)

Orgy Organizers Sentenced

2 get life in case that roiled China-Japan relations

BEIJING | A Chinese court sentenced a hotel worker and a prostitute to life in prison on Wednesday for organizing a three-day sex party for Japanese tourists — a case that outraged Chinese and reignited anger over Japan's war-time conduct.

Twelve other people were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison, and China said it had issued arrest warrants for three Japanese accused of organizing the event.

According to earlier Chinese reports, the incident involved as many as 400 Japanese men and 500 Chinese prostitutes at a hotel in the southern city of Zhuhai.

Its final day fell on Sept. 18, the anniversary of a Japanese attack in 1931 on a city in China's northeast that Chinese regard as the start of World War II. The timing, which appeared to be coincidental, angered Chinese, many of whom believe Japan hasn't atoned

for wartime brutality — including mass rapes.

Beijing's pursuit of the Japanese suspects threatened to complicate the countries' relations further. There is no extradition treaty in place between Japan and China, and a Justice Ministry official in Tokyo said Japanese law doesn't allow the government to turn over any citizen to a country without one.

The trial began Friday and ended Saturday amid tight security in the Zhuhai Intermediate Court. JOE MCDONALD (AP)

Bosnia to Pay U.S. Detainees' Families

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA | The Bosnian government said Wednesday it would pay \$19,000 to the families of six Algerian citizens who were handed over to the United States as terrorist suspects.

The men are still being held at a U.S. prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They were arrested by Bosnian police in October 2001, suspected of having ties to al Qaeda

and making threats to the U.S. and British embassies in Bosnia.

The threats could not be proven in Bosnian courts, but the men continued to be held in prison. Their lawyers appealed to Bosnia's top human rights court. On Jan. 17, 2002, hours before the Human Rights Chamber was to order their release for lack of evidence, police handed over the men to U.S. authorities. (AP)

HEARSAY | ZIMBABWE

"It's suddenly a crime to have a piece of equipment you cannot use."

— JOHN WORSELY-WORSWICK, FARMER
REACTING WEDNESDAY TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO SEIZE TRACTORS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT FROM WHITE FARMERS WHO WERE THROWN OFF THEIR PROPERTIES UNDER PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE'S CONTROVERSIAL FARM-SEIZURE PROGRAM.

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Local

Va. Budget Holds \$2.4B Increase

RICHMOND, VA. | Gov. Mark R. Warner introduced a new state budget Wednesday that includes nearly \$2.4 billion in new spending requirements, largely for education, health services and transportation.

The budget provides \$760 million in additional money for public schools and \$144 million more for higher education, \$870 million more for health services such as Medicaid and \$392 million more for transportation.

It ends three years of drawdowns of the state's "rainy-day" fund and begins replenishing the fund in 2006 with the deposit of \$87 million, a critical step if Virginia is to retain its optimal "AAA" credit rating — a stamp of fiscal fitness the



Gov. Mark Warner's budget is pro-education and pro-transportation.

state has never lost.

Warner's budget for the two years that begin July 1 is based on revenue projections and tax reforms that he made public last month, including a 1-cent increase in the state sales tax and offsetting reductions in income taxes and the tax on food.

Warner also said his budget provides nearly \$104 million to boost pay for public employees, school teachers and local government workers whose salaries are subsidized by the state.

BOB LEWIS AND JUSTIN BERGMAN (AP)

Sudden impact: A breakdown of Gov. Mark Warner's proposed budget, and how it affects residents of northern Virginia | washingtontimes.com/metro

The Lotteries

December 17

DISTRICT

Mid-day Lucky Numbers	9-3-9
Evening Lucky Numbers	6-1-9
Mid-day DC 4	5-8-0-7
Evening DC 4	5-7-6-2
Quick Cash	16-33-14-28-7-32
Hot Five	14-23-18-12-25

MARYLAND

Mid-day Pick 3	1-3-9
Evening Pick 3	4-0-8
Mid-day Pick 4	2-9-6-9
Evening Pick 4	6-6-5-3
Match 5	13-17-22-28-31 Bonus: 8

VIRGINIA

Mid-day Pick 3 (Wed.)	1-8-1
Evening Pick 3 (Tues.)	9-2-4
Mid-day Pick 4 (Wed.)	8-6-9-7
Evening Pick 4 (Tues.)	3-4-9-1
Mid-day Cash 5 (Wed.)	8-14-27-28-29
Evening Cash 5 (Tues.)	2-3-15-19-32

MULTI-STATE GAMES

Mega Millions (Tues.)	16-24-31-46-47
Mega Ball	47

All winning numbers are official only when validated at a lottery ticket location or a lottery claims office. Drawings that occur after Express's deadline will be published two days later.



ALL ABOARD: Richmond's 102-year-old Main Street Station reopened Wednesday, with daily passenger railroad service scheduled to resume on Thursday. (AP)

Malvo Jury to Continue Deliberations

CHESAPEAKE, VA. | Jurors reached no verdict Wednesday during a full day of deliberations in the capital murder trial of sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo.

The jury was to resume deliberations at 9 a.m. Thursday.

The jurors asked several questions at the end of the day, including a request to again see the Chevrolet Caprice that Malvo and

Girl Shot On D.C. Street

WASHINGTON | Police were searching for the gunman who shot and wounded a six-year-old girl Wednesday, as she walked down a Southeast Washington street. A man was also shot and killed.

"There was a woman who was walking two children down C Street. One of those children, a six-year-old female, was struck in the abdomen from a stray bullet," said District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey.

The girl suffered entry and exit wounds. She was taken to Children's National Medical Center for surgery, and was later in critical but stable condition.

Near where the girl was found, police also found a man who had been shot. Police said Jovani Jefferson, 22, died later at Washington Hospital Center.

The chief said that the man may recently have been released from jail, but it remained unclear whether his incarceration has anything to do with the shooting. DERRILL HOLLY (AP)

Decades-Old Suit Could Be Near End

WASHINGTON | The attorney in a decades-old class action lawsuit over the treatment of the mentally ill in the District said Wednesday the suit could end in a year if the city continues to reform its services.

"The District was about 20

years behind and now it's caught up," said Peter Nickles. The suit was filed in 1974 on behalf of more than 10,000 people "warehoused" at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Nickles said. It contends individuals are entitled to the "least restrictive setting" for the treatment of mental illness.

He said a judge recently approved a set of 15 performance measures that, if met, would end the suit. (EXPRESS)

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XX309

Money

NYSE to Split Top Job, Shift Board

Exchange responds to pay scandal, lawsuit with new concessions

WASHINGTON | Federal regulators, responding to a scandal at the New York Stock Exchange, approved an overhaul Wednesday after the exchange agreed to split its top executive position to avoid massing too much power in one person.

The Securities and Exchange Commission voted 5-0 to approve the overhaul plan proposed by the exchange's interim chairman, John Reed, and endorsed last month by 98 percent of the exchange's members. The plan will establish a smaller and more independent board of directors to oversee regulation of the exchange and appointment of an autonomous regulatory officer.

The nation's largest stock exchange is emerging from controversy that arose in September over its chairman's pay and power.

On Tuesday, the nation's largest public pension fund, the \$154 billion California Public Employees

Retirement System, announced it was filing a class-action lawsuit against the NYSE and seven trading firms, alleging that fraudulent practices cost the system millions of dollars.

CalPERS and other public pension funds have insisted that the proposed NYSE reforms aren't enough to restore investors' trust, shaken by revelations of the \$188 million pay package of former chairman Dick Grasso. MARCY GORDON (AP)



Reed

Best Buy Outpaces Rival Circuit City

NEW YORK | The outlook for the holiday season appears murky, as the nation's two biggest consumer electronics chains offered mixed third-quarter results on Wednesday.

Best Buy said earnings more than doubled in the third quarter on strong sales of notebook computers, flat-panel televisions and digital cameras and camcorders,

matching projections.

Meanwhile, rival Circuit City swung to a profit for its third quarter even as sales fell slightly. However, when excluding results from its bank card operations, its results came in below expectations.

Experts said Best Buy continues to gain despite the success of Wal-Mart and other discounters. (AP)

Market Action

New York Stock Exchange

Gainers

STOCK	LAST	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY PERCENT CHANGE
Footstar	4.75	+.48	+11.2
TwrAuto	6.15	+.62	+11.2
CmclMtl	30.00	+2.90	+10.7
AGCO	18.80	+1.73	+10.1
MarineMx	18.15	+1.59	+9.6

Losers

BLKHCp	28.21	-4.33	-13.3
BarryRG h	4.40	-.49	-10.0
Greif A	34.70	-3.15	-8.3
vjGrace	2.62	-.23	-8.1
ProvHlth	14.20	-1.19	-7.7

Rates

	CURRENT	PREVIOUS WEEK
Prime Rate	4.00	4.00
Fed Funds close	1.00	1.00
3-month	0.88	0.89
2-year	1.80	1.92
10-year	4.19	4.32
30-year	5.02	5.15

NASDAQ Stock Market

Gainers

STOCK	LAST	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY PERCENT CHANGE
MACC	3.09	+.64	+26.1
HghwyH	3.87	+.69	+21.7
ViroLogc	3.45	+.57	+19.8
Zoltek	6.21	+1.02	+19.7
LaCrose	6.81	+1.09	+19.0

Losers

STOCK	LAST	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY PERCENT CHANGE
DiamHll rs	6.00	-1.14	-16.0
MKTGrs	4.55	-.85	-15.7
Rambus	25.88	-4.17	-13.9
Minorpln rs	2.25	-.35	-13.5
PaulaFn	2.46	-.35	-12.5

Currency (Dollars in foreign currency)

	TODAY	PREVIOUS DAY	YEAR AGO
British Pound	.5657	.5696	.6256
Canadian Dollar	1.3263	1.3248	1.5501
European Euro	.8062	.8105	.9725
Japanese Yen	107.36	107.43	121.24
Mexican Peso	11.2450	11.2545	10.2500
Taiwanese Dollar	34.03	34.01	34.79

In Brief

RESOURCES

Oil Prices Surge Ahead

Crude futures prices surged Wednesday, leaping to heights not seen since just before the U.S.-led war in Iraq, as government inventory data revealed oil inventories had again dwindled to the lowest level ever recorded in December. January light, sweet crude futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange settled 46 cents higher at \$33.35 a barrel — a front-month high not seen since March 17, when prices reached \$36.40 a barrel. Crude stocks are now hovering just above the crucial 270-million-barrel guidepost the National Petroleum Council issued as an indicator of low oil supplies. (AP)

IPO WATCH

Travel Site Orbitz Trades Heavily on Opening Day

Orbitz Inc. made a roller-coaster debut as a publicly traded company Wednesday — its shares initially surging 18 percent before finishing the day below their initial public offering price in heavy volume that underscored investors' revived interest in IPOs. The four-year-old Internet travel company, backed by the five biggest U.S. airlines, raised nearly \$100 million from the IPO as it takes aim at its two larger competitors in the growing business: Expedia and Travelocity. The company's stock, priced at \$26 per share Tuesday, jumped quickly to \$30.75 before tumbling to close at \$24.98. (AP)

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NASDAQ

-2.96

-0.15

1921.33

S & P 500

+1.35

+0.13

1076.48

Bank Stocks

STOCK	LAST	DAILY CHANGE	YEAR TO DATE PERCENT CHANGE
BcBilArg	12.91	+.03	+33.0
BcoSnCH	11.10	+.10	+57.4
BankOne	43.85	-.26	+20.0
Bk of Am	77.88	+.38	+11.9
Barclay	34.95	+.90	+41.5
CredSuisse	34.77	-.88	+63.4
DeutschBk	76.72	-1.53	+68.9
FleetBost	42.00	+.27	+72.8
HSBC	76.18	-.29	+38.6
JPMorgCh	35.66	-.06	+48.6
LloydTSB	30.43	+.39	+6.4
UBS AG	67.33	-.02	+39.9
US Bancrp	28.36	+.24	+33.6
Wachovia	45.78	-.08	+25.6
WellsFrgo	57.30	+.15	+22.3

Hall-of-Fame QB Graham Dies From Heart Condition

PRO FOOTBALL | Otto Graham, the Hall of Fame quarterback who led the Cleveland Browns to a championship game in every season he played, has died. He was 82.

Graham died in Sarasota, Florida, team spokesman Todd Stewart said Wednesday. He was taken to Sarasota Memorial Hospital earlier in the day with the same heart condition that killed actor John Ritter, said his son, Duey Graham.

Nicknamed "Automatic Otto," Graham never missed a game as a pro while passing for 23,584 yards and 174 touchdowns. He finished his career with an astounding 105-17-4 regular-season record. (AP)

BASEBALL | CENTER OF ATTENTION



CATCHING ON: After signing a three-year, \$39 million contract with the New York Yankees, outfielder Gary Sheffield was mobbed by reporters Tuesday.

Blockbuster Trade Dealt Setback

Boston's plan for Rodriguez's contract rejected

PRO BASEBALL | The baseball players' union rejected Boston's proposed changes to Alex Rodriguez's contract Wednesday, jeopardizing trade talks between the Red Sox and Rangers.

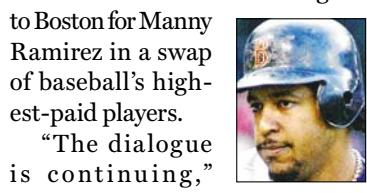
Rodriguez and Boston general manager Theo Epstein spent the day meeting with Scott Boras, the shortstop's agent, and Gene Orza, the union's No. 2 official.

Still, the trade is not dead yet. Boras expects the parties to

meet again Thursday, and Texas owner Tom Hicks set a Thursday evening deadline for an agreement that would send Rodriguez to Boston for Manny Ramirez in a swap of baseball's highest-paid players.

"The dialogue is continuing," Boras said. Should the trade happen, Boston will likely trade shortstop Nomar Graciaparra.

Rodriguez has completed three seasons of his record \$252 million, 10-year contract and Ramirez has



Rodriguez

finished three seasons of his \$160 million, eight-year deal.

Boston wants Rodriguez to rework his contract, but baseball's collective bargaining agreement says deals can be reworked only to add benefits for players.

"We did suggest an offer the club could make to Alex," Orza said. "As was its right, the club chose not to make it." Orza and Boras wouldn't detail Boston's proposal. Rodriguez's contract has \$179 million remaining on it.

"The principle involved is a transcendent one, affecting all of Alex's fellow players," Orza said. "To his credit, Alex, from the outset, recognized this." RONALD BLUM (AP)

Clarett Cleared in Ohio State Probe

COLLEGE FOOTBALL | Ohio State investigators found no evidence of academic misconduct by suspended star tailback Maurice Clarett or other athletes.

University president Karen Holbrook said Wednesday that a committee did not discover any instances of athletes receiving inappropriate help from tutors or preferential treatment by professors.

Holbrook said federal privacy laws prevent the university from

revealing information about specific students.

A committee was formed to review athletes' academic performances after The New York Times reported in July that Clarett passed a class in 2002 by taking two oral exams.

Clarett, who led the Buckeyes to a national title last season, was suspended this year for accepting money from a family friend and lying about it to investigators.

Chemistry professor Matthew Platz, who led the school's investigation, said the NCAA reviewed the committee's report and indicated it will not take action. (AP)

Coles Has Stress Fracture in Foot

PRO FOOTBALL | Washington Redskins receiver Laveranues Coles said Wednesday he has played nearly the entire season with a stress fracture in his foot.

The injury, which has bothered Coles since September, has made it painful to run routes, but it hasn't stopped him from being one of the team's most valuable assets in a dismal year. Coles leads the Redskins (5-9) with 69 catches for 1,023 yards.

"I tried to keep it under wraps," Coles said. "Because as a football

Fassel Handled Pink Slip by N.Y.

Coach will remain in charge of Giants for last 2 games of season

PRO FOOTBALL | Coach Jim Fassel was fired by the New York Giants after a disappointing season that began with hopes of reaching the Super Bowl.

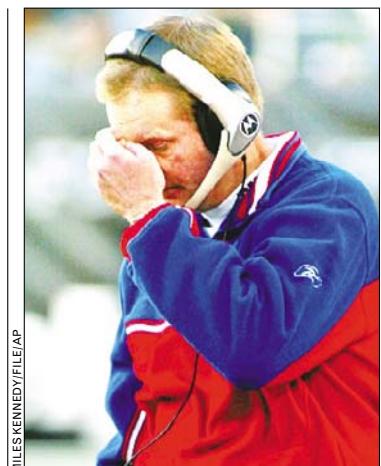
"It's time. They need a change, I need a change. It's the right thing to do," Fassel said Wednesday.

He will coach the last two games of the season. Fassel had a year left on his contract at a salary of about \$2.5 million.

Fassel was told of the decision Tuesday in a meeting he requested with Giants co-owners Wellington Mara and Bob Tisch and executive vice president John Mara.

A Super Bowl team three seasons ago and expected to contend again, the Giants (4-10) have dropped six straight games to fall to last place in the NFC East. It's the team's longest losing streak in 10 years.

In seven seasons as the Giants'

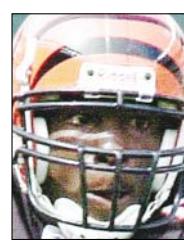


Jim Fassel's Giants have a 4-10 record, leading to his firing Tuesday morning.

coach, Fassel is 60-54-1, including the postseason. Among the possible successors to Fassel are Louisiana State University coach Nick Saban, former Jaguars coach Tom Coughlin and the Patriots' two coordinators: Romeo Crennel and Charlie Weis. Coughlin, Crennel and Weis were Giants assistants under Bill Parcells.

TOM CANAVAN (AP)

HEARSAY | TOUCHDOWN CELEBRATIONS



"I've got two more games left [this season] — that's two more fines, then I'm finished for the rest of my career with the fines."

—CINCINNATI WIDE RECEIVER CHAD JOHNSON
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Laveranues Coles may need surgery.

Coles hasn't missed a game, but his production has declined in recent weeks. JOSEPH WHITE (AP)

Playing out the string: Mark Maske discusses the Redskins' disappointing season and previews Sunday's game with the Bears | washingtonpost.com/liveonline at 10:45 a.m.

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Sports

Ravens Try to Prevent A Repeat of Last Season

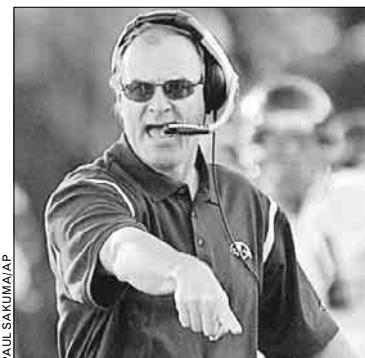
PRO FOOTBALL | A year ago, the Baltimore Ravens' playoff hopes hinged upon beating Cleveland and Pittsburgh in their final two games. Baltimore lost twice and finished 7-9.

The Ravens face the same scenario this year, with one significant difference: They're better equipped to handle the task. "You would hope so," coach Brian Billick said Wednesday. "We have more experience, having been down this road before."

Fielding one of the youngest teams in NFL history, Billick last year kept Baltimore in the playoff hunt until the final two games — a 14-13 loss at home against Cleveland and a 34-31 defeat at Pittsburgh.

That Ravens team had Jeff Blake at quarterback and Bernardo Harris at middle linebacker in place of the injured Ray Lewis.

Anthony Wright is now the start-



Brian Billick's Ravens are tied for first place in the AFC North with the Bengals.

ing quarterback, Lewis is playing like an MVP and the rookies are accustomed to life in the NFL. So as the Ravens (8-6) prepare for Sunday's game in Cleveland and peek ahead toward the finale against Pittsburgh, they believe they're better prepared for the stretch run. DAVID GINSBURG (AP)



Steve Spurrier hasn't said what changes he plans for next season in D.C.

he means by "restructure, reorganize, regroup," deferring such questions until the end of the season. Such words are usually associated with front office shakeups, an area over which Spurrier has no control. (AP)

Spurrier did not elaborate on what

Spurrier Promises Changes in 2004

PRO FOOTBALL | Washington Redskins coach Steve Spurrier is promising changes for next season. The specifics will have to wait until this one is done.

Spurrier sought Wednesday to quell reports he is considering changes to his coaching staff. Otherwise, it appears a different look is in store for Spurrier's third year.

"I've never mentioned anything about changing coaches," Spurrier said. "All I've said is we've got to do something different around here. We've got to restructure, reorganize, regroup, whatever you want to call it."

Spurrier did not elaborate on what

TODAY'S TV LINEUP

COLLEGE FOOTBALL (7:30 on ESPN2) Two of the nation's top quarterbacks are on display when Ben Roethlisberger leads Miami (Ohio) against Stefan LeFors and Louisville in the GMAC bowl.

PRO BASKETBALL (7:30 p.m. on TNT) Only half a game separates Minnesota from first-place Dallas in the Midwest division.

PRO BASKETBALL (10 p.m. on TNT) Underachieving Portland (11-11) hosts the Phoenix Suns (9-16).

PRO HOCKEY (8 p.m. on ESPN) The Islanders and Rangers play.

PRO FOOTBALL (7 p.m. on ESPN) The Pro Bowl teams are announced on the Pro Bowl selection show. Why do they televise this again?

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Lookout

Not-So-Perfect Gift

Holiday shopping cards sound great, but watch for fees

GIFTS | Like more and more holiday shoppers, Juliette Coulter of Dallas thinks the right gift for many friends and family members is plastic and fits in a wallet.

She's spending \$300 this season on gift cards from Target, Old Navy, Starbucks and other stores. It means no worrying, for example, about size or style for a pair of nephews age 9 and 14.

"They have very specific tastes, and I don't want to get them the wrong thing," she said. "I want them to think I'm the cool aunt."

Gift cards are hotter than ever this season, with merchants expected to sell more than \$17 billion worth during the holidays, or 8 percent of all business.

Yet as the cards become more familiar, many recipients are grum-

bling about some headaches associated with them — fees if the cards are not used quickly, problems getting replacements if they are stolen or lost, and questions about what to do with those last few dollars or even cents of credit.

Aware of the issues, some store chains are revising their policies or doing more to educate customers about how to get the most out of gift cards.

Coulter said she doesn't worry about card fees because her recipients use them quickly — which is often the only way to make sure you get full value.

Dennis Fish of Atlanta learned that the hard way.

Fish purchased a \$120 gift certificate from a spa for himself and his wife last year. They waited just over a year to use it — and were hit with a 20 percent "reactivation" charge. The card had a one-year expiration period.

"Never will I buy one again until



GUESS NOT: Giving gift cards, like those on display at this Wal-Mart in Little Rock, Ark., ensures recipients get exactly what they want — most of the time.

I know the policies," he said.

Brad Ferris of Washington says gift cards "drive me nuts."

"If you get a \$300 card and you only purchase \$250, you end up forking out more money to these stores because they don't refund the cash you don't spend," he said.

Besides reactivation fees, some store cards carry a kind of reverse-interest that's charged over time. Bank-issued cards often have an initial charge.

"Consumers are going to find out that their gift cards are not worth as much as they thought

they were," said Gail Hillebrand of the consumer advocacy group Consumers Union of U.S. Inc.

Retailers say reactivation and other fees help cover costs to maintain the systems that track card credits, and are fair because the costs are charged only to consumers who delay.

Michael Brown, a retail operations specialist at Kurt Salmon Associates, estimated that 10 percent to 15 percent of the value of the cards are never used.

Hillebrand knows how gift-givers can prevent that.

"Write a check," she advised.

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO (AP)

THE FINE PRINT

A sampling of retailers with gift-card fees or restrictions:

→ **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.** charges \$1 fee per month after 24 consecutive months of inactivity.

→ **Barnes & Noble Inc.** will replace damaged cards, but not stolen or lost cards.

→ **Simon Properties-Visa** gift card program has an initial fee of \$1.50 and a service fee of \$2.50 per month beginning with the seventh month.



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Entertainment

WeekendPass



SOUL SEARCHER: At 32, Macy Gray is more comfortable with her odd voice but no less introspective.

Top Stops

FOR COMPLETE EVENT LISTINGS SEE WASHINGTONPOST.COM/ENTERTAINMENT

Cabaret Christmas: Sending Up Santa

"Not Another Holiday Show" is another holiday show with a twist: This cabaret-style performance features funny songs taking on the stress and silliness of the season.

RoundHouse Theatre, 8641 Colesville Road, Silver Spring; Fri.-Sun., Dec. 19-21; 240-644-1100. (Silver Spring)

It's a Bird? It's a Plane? It's Actually a Rodent

Two words: flying squirrels. Wheaton Regional Park presents a lecture on our local Rocky J's and will even bribe the furry flyers to put on an aerial show for visitors.

Wheaton Regional Park, 2000 Shorefield Road, Wheaton; Fri., Dec. 19, 5:30 p.m.; 301-495-2525.



Apologies to Bullwinkle J. Moose, but these little guys are scary-looking.

Pushkin Plus: 'Mazeppa' Opens

Kirov Opera opens another Pushkin staging. "Mazeppa," set during the reign of Peter the Great, tells of the struggle of the Ukrainian separatist to keep plans of his revolution secret while falling in love.

Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; Thu., Dec. 18 & Sat., Dec. 20; 7:30 p.m., \$40-\$250; 202-467-4600. (Foggy Bottom)

Continued on page 14

Crazy for You

Macy Gray hasn't gotten less weird; she's gotten better

MUSIC | There can be no more potent satisfaction for an artist commonly and frequently tagged as a weirdo than to see your album shoot up the charts and to watch audiences of devoted fans mouthing along with your lyrics.

Weirdos, of course, are rock

mainstays. But Macy Gray is considered weird for a rock star. Still, her latest, the aptly titled "The Trouble With Being Myself," blasted up to No. 29 on the R&B charts and re-established her as a musical force to be reckoned with, if an indefinable one. She'll be reminded of how popular she is this Thursday, a welcome solo comeback after David Bowie, for whom she was opening, canceled his East Coast gigs earlier this month.

In 1999, when "neo-soul" was the byword for the music of polite young ladies who like to sit while singing, Macy Gray, an accidental singer from Canton, Ohio, was speaking out "On How Life Is" in her sexy, girlish, menacing grosgrain voice.

That's what happens when you don't — when you can't — sound like anybody else. Gray's raspy pipes made Rod Stewart sound like Mel Torme, and her rainbow of funky-fresh grooves, her self-celebrating

style, her confessional songwriting owed more to '70s rock and funk than to the satin-sheet soul of her chart sisters. With sinuous vibes Marvin Gaye would have recognized and uncompromising lyrics even bare-bones folkies might shy away from, Gray has proven herself one of the most fearless and most enjoyable young artists around.

Her reputation, meanwhile, runs from a slightly-out-of-it chick to heavy indulger in herbal relaxants to pure nutball. We don't care; when Gray sings "You are relating to a psychopath," the groove is so deep, it's a pleasure to go under. (EXPRESS)

9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW; Thu., Dec. 18, 10 p.m., \$35; 703-218-6500. (U St.-Cardozo)



Emperor's Song: The fairy tale "The Nightingale" is recounted in a sumptuous dance spectacle.

DANCE | 14



Ice Water in His Veins: "Frozy the Abominable Snowman" is a seasonal symbol run amok. Like your spending.

STAGE | 15



Cookie Crumbles: Add a spicy twist to an old favorite with cardamom in your spritz.

FOOD | 20

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XX309

Weekend Pass | Entertainment

Second Sight

MUSIC | It's no visit to the retirement home to hear these septuagenarians sing. And hark, these herald angels sure do sing (and dance).

It's a full-gospel throwdown when the Blind Boys of Alabama are led — literally — onstage and then cut loose. From traditional soul-stirrers like "Motherless Child," to originals that are nearly standards 60 years on, to songs by a few of their musical progeny (Curtis Mayfield, Tom Waits, Ben Harper and Funkadelic) — all receive the Blind Boys' blazing jubilee treatment.

Formed at the Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind in the 1930s, the group began performing together around age 14. Their first tour was in 1944, in a '39 Buick driven by a couple of deaf classmates. The reception was ecstatic, but exploitative record-



TODDRADUNSKY/REALWORLD

Five Blind Boys, give or take a few 70-something "boys," still sing like angels.

ing contracts kept them living on a shoestring. Still, the sound they championed along with the likes of Mahalia Jackson helped to inspire

singers like Aretha Franklin, the Four Tops, Little Richard, Stevie Wonder and others.

Of course, white performers like Elvis, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles eventually dominated the radio with their own takes on that pioneering influence. Though they never stopped performing, the Blind Boys seemed to disappear.

Enter Peter Gabriel, who signed the Blind Boys to his Real World label in the late '90s. Their albums "Spirit of the Century" and "Higher Ground" not only restored their visibility and earned them fair royalties for the first time, they also provided a chance for their musical descendants to give back.

Robert Randolph, Solomon Burke, Aaron Neville and Shelby Lynne are just some of the guests. The Boys' new collection of sacred Christmas songs, "Go Tell It on the Mountain," reveals 70-somethings filled with such fire that it must be divinely inspired. (BOB MASSEY)

GWU Lisner Auditorium, 730 21st St. NW; Sat., Dec. 20, 8 p.m., \$25-\$45. 202-994-6800. (Foggy Bottom)

FAIRY TALES | THE EMPEROR'S NEW BIRD



COURTESY OF GMU CENTER FOR THE ARTS

SONG FOR A LONELY REGENT: Hans Christian Anderson's lovely story "The Nightingale" comes to life in a vibrant dance-driven performance. George Mason University, Center for the Arts, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax; Sun., Dec. 21, 1 and 4 p.m., \$15, free to children under 13; 703-218-6500.

TopStops

Continued from page 13

Let the Children Play: Hungry for Music Benefit

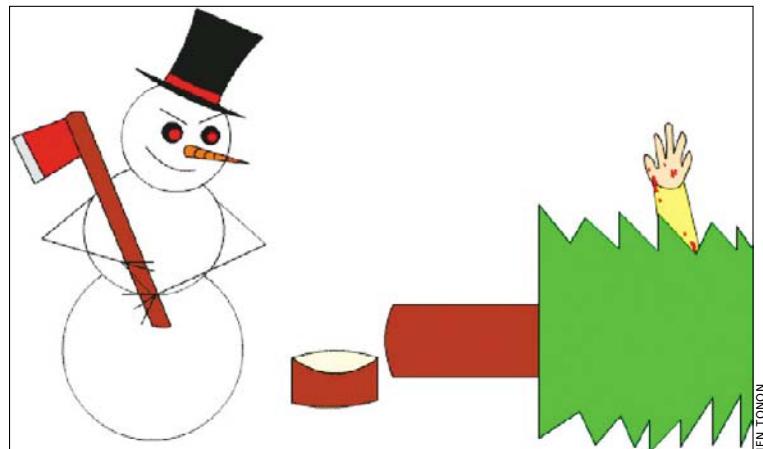
Join the brightest lights on the local roots-roots scene for a worthy-yet-rockin' holiday event — the Hungry for Music Benefit and Concert. Last Train Home, Bill Kirchen & Too Much Fun and others take the stage for this fundraiser. Hungry for Music runs a musical instrument-distribution program for inner-city D.C. kids.

State Theatre, 220 N. Washington St., Falls Church; Thu., Dec. 18, 8 p.m., \$16; 703-237-0300. (East Falls)

Continued on page 19



JIM SAH
Last Train Home will rock on behalf
of kids getting their own instruments.



JUST AX SANTA: Hey, kids! Looks like Frozy accidentally cut down someone's Christmas tree. Someone's getting coal in his stocking this year.

Egg Nog, Holly & Mayhem

STAGE | What rough beast slouches toward the North Pole to be born? It's Frozy, kids, the Abominable Snowman, and he's serving up great steaming platters of violence and mayhem this holiday season.

Welcome to the twisted minds of Landless Theatre Company, socially stunted jokers who have re-written a holiday classic as a taste-free freak show with horror by the sleighful and parody up the chimney.

"Frozy the Abominable Snowman" sends up science-horror classics with a story of mad scientist Dr. Frozy (Russell Jordan) conscripted by an evil trophy babe (Sarah McKnight) to give her rich husband the deep-freeze treatment.

But the ice man (Chad Allen) cometh alive, and goes on a homicidal spree. This show cannot be recommended for children whose idea of Christmas stage fun is the pastel

prancing of "The Nutcracker."

All we know is it's not Christmas unless one of the season's beloved icons goes medieval on some carolers. Oh, and it's a musical, with songs from D.C.'s own Quiz Show Scandals. You'll laugh, you'll cringe; you'll never look at a scarf and carrot the same way again. (EXPRESS)

H Street Playhouse, 1365 H St. NE; Fri.-Sat., Dec. 19-20, 10 p.m., \$10; 202-396-2125.

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Weekend Pass

Entertainment

Energy Crisis

MUSIC | Fuel thought their song "Shimmer" was so good they released it twice.

Perhaps the blunt trauma of repetition is what distinguished Fuel from the pack of monosyllabic post-grunge bands that mined the same sonic territory. Or maybe their videos weren't as lousy as Creed's. Or they had better hair than Live.

Whatever; something worked and their breakthrough album, "Sunburn," went platinum. Now we all share in singer Brett Scallions's and lyricist Carl Bell's personal sufferings.

"Hemorrhage (In My Hands)," Fuel's inescapable 2001 hit, filled every mall, gym and Land Rover with vague distress.



SUPER-PREMIUM FUEL: muscular, monosyllabic post-grunge with really good hair.

They supersized that McHit with "Falls on Me," another anthem of discomfort from their latest album, "Natural Selection." Which is probably not an ironic title, though the critics would suggest otherwise.

If Fuel's albums are any indication, you can expect professional competence when they hit Nation on Sunday night. If you need more daring, yell for them to play "Shimmer" twice. (BOB MASSEY)

Nation, 1015 Half St. SE; Sun., Dec. 21, 7 p.m., tickets are free through DC101. (Navy Yard)

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RETURN OF THE KING (PG-13) (10:00 2:15) 6:30 10:45
HAUNTED MANSION (PG) (11:00 2:00 4:10) 7:00 10:00

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LOST IN TRANSLATION (R) (2:00 4:10) 6:30 9:00
MYSTIC RIVER (R) (1:15 4:15) 7:00 9:30
IN AMERICA (PG-13) (1:30 4:20) 7:10 9:30
STATION AGENT (R) (1:20 3:40) 6:50 9:10
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★ LOVE DON'T COST (PG-13) (12:15 2:40 5:10) 7:30 9:45

★ LAST SAMURAI (R) (12:10 3:30) 6:40 9:50

LOVE ACTUALLY (R) 7:10 10:00

CAT IN THE HAT (PG) (12:25 2:30 4:35)

ELF (PG) (1:50 4:10) 7:00 9:30

ELF (PG) (1:30 3:50) 6:20 8:30

HAUNTED MANSION (PG) (2:10 4:20) 7:00 9:00

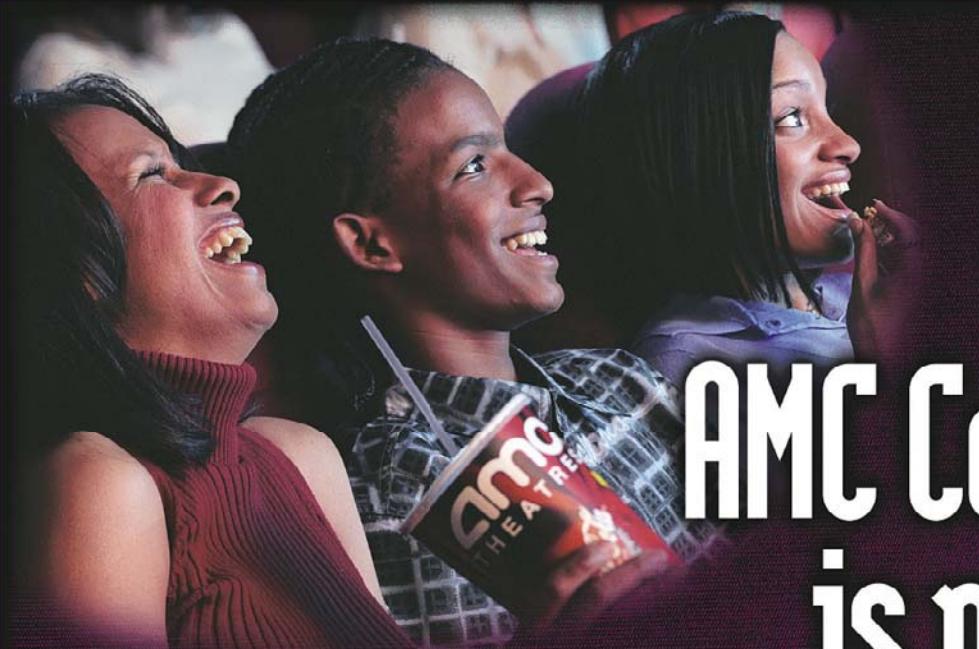
BAD SANTA (R) (12:50 3:20 5:30) 7:50 10:10

★ SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE (PG-13) (12:40 3:40) 6:35 9:35

★ STUCK ON YOU (PG-13) (1:10 4:20) 2:25 5:00 7:30 9:55

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1:00, 4:20, 7:50

12:15, 2:40, 5:00, 7:20, 9:40

12:40, 2:50, 5:05, 7:25, 9:35

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18 | EXPRESS | 12.18.2003 | THURSDAY

Weekend Pass | Entertainment

Back to Burlesque

D.C. can't get enough of that new-wave vaudeville stuff

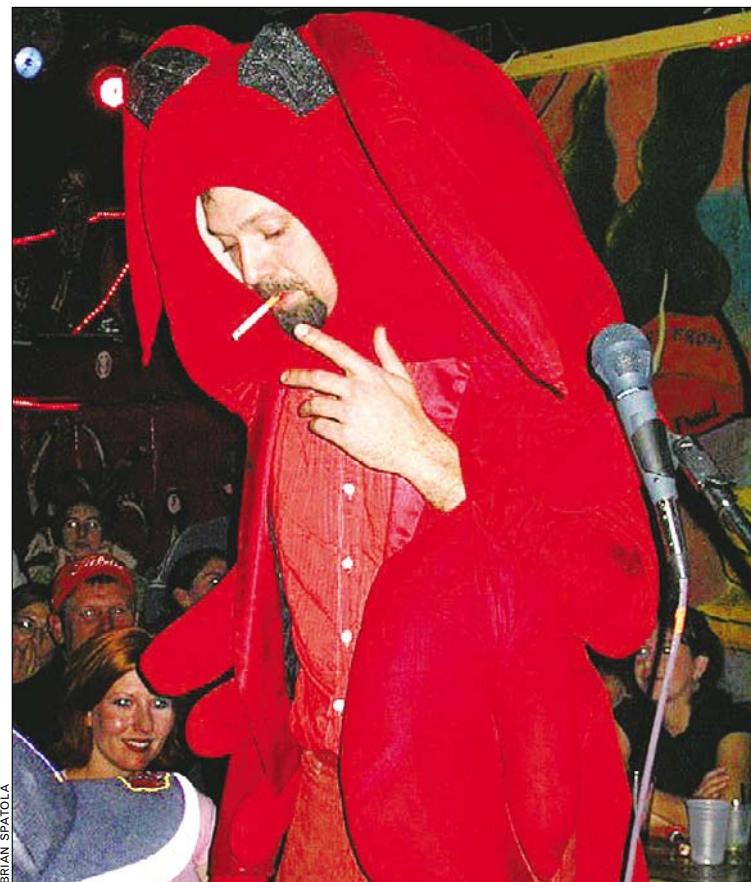
OUT & ABOUT | We begged Lobster Boy to come back. We were all, "But Lobster Boy, you can't leave us now; your Lobster Boy Revue was so full of astounding acts, pulchritudinous women and dazzling artistry. If you go, the glitter of hope twinkles and vanishes with you."

And Lobster Boy was all, "I do not twinkle, bub" and we were all, "Into the pot with you, smart-mouth," and then it got ugly.

But we've since made up, and L.B. is back, an accordion clutched in his claws, a posse of freaks and artistes trailing behind him. He's your big red host of "Lobster Boy's Christmas Special," an old-fashioned burlesque show with song and dance, illusion and comedy, pretty girls and the chimerical hand of fate, on the menu this weekend. With butter sauce.

Kidding, L.B. Sheesh.

Accompanying the (other) guy in red are: Evil Pappy Twin, who vies with Good Pappy Twin for musical supremacy as they rip into screaming '80s and '90s headbanging metal on a lute; Sea Monster (talents vague); Dren the Liar, who does stupid and dangerous things



FASHION (ON A PLATE: This old thing? Just something I found on the ocean floor.

for a living, from magic to contortion, juggling and fire manipulation while making jokes about it. Don't believe a word he says.

Also on tap, other folks who do some stuff: Polly the Card

Girl, tattooed beauty Sugar-Babe Goodhue, and Steve Lipmoski and his Nutcracker Sven, a real buddy act. (EXPRESS)

Madam's Organ, 2461 18th St. NW; Sun., Dec. 21, 9 p.m., \$10; lobsterboy.net.

LIVE MUSIC | TALKING BACK



REAL LADIES AREN'T NICE: Bigmouth blues with a feminist bent, Saffire the Uppity Blues Women have got plenty to sing about. Birchmere, 3701 Mt. Vernon Ave.; Alexandria; Sat., Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m. \$22.50; 703-549-7500.

Friday in

The Washington Post | Weekend Section

Pretty on the Outside

Help yourself to a free sheet of wrapping paper designed by this year's Ages 3-12 Christmas Paper Contest winner. | *Cover*

It's Greek to Us

Eve Zibart finds that Bethesda's Athenian Plaka has been revitalized by new owners and a terrific menu. | *Fare-Minded*

Hometown Gems

Michael O'Sullivan tells you what's new and noteworthy in the East and West wings of the National Gallery. | *On Exhibit*

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out

FILM | Quick: How many times do you have to be dared before putting your tongue to a frozen flagpole?

That's right, the risky triple-dog dare is the *ne plus ultra* of boyhood chest-bumping, as demonstrated with horrible, adorable vividness by Bob Clark's 1983 "A Christmas Story." The movie, based on the boyhood reminiscences of humorist Jean Shepherd, went from cult to cozy and has enshrined in every fan's mind a certain old-fashioned ideal of Christmas: cynical, sentimental, bravura and as curious about dirty words ("... only I didn't say 'fudge,'" as Ralphie woefully admits) as only kids can be.



Peter Billingsley's Ralphie fixes Santa with his most ingratiating smile.

AFI resurrects this shiny bauble and places it lovingly in its most flattering setting — a movie theater. Away from the hustle and bustle of expanded DVDs and the chintzy, interruption-ridden television airings, "A Christmas Story" blossoms on the big screen.

Bring the little ones, but remember that now the evil department-store Santa and his malevolent elves are going to be 10 feet tall.

Ho!

Ho!

HO! (EXPRESS)

American Film Institute, 8633 Colesville Road, Silver Spring; Fri., Dec. 19; 6:45 p.m., \$8.50; 301-495-6720.

TopStops

Continued from page 14

Living Doll: Cyndi Lauper

Anyone who lived through the '80s or even heard about them has a soft spot for this most unusual girl. Cute as a bug in a rug and musically uncompromising to boot, Cyndi Lauper is still forging her own path — which has taken her from hiccupy new wave to Prince covers to, most recently, ravishing standards on her latest album, "At Last" — after 20 up, down and sideways years in a



RODNEY SMITH
After rough seas, calm weather ahead.

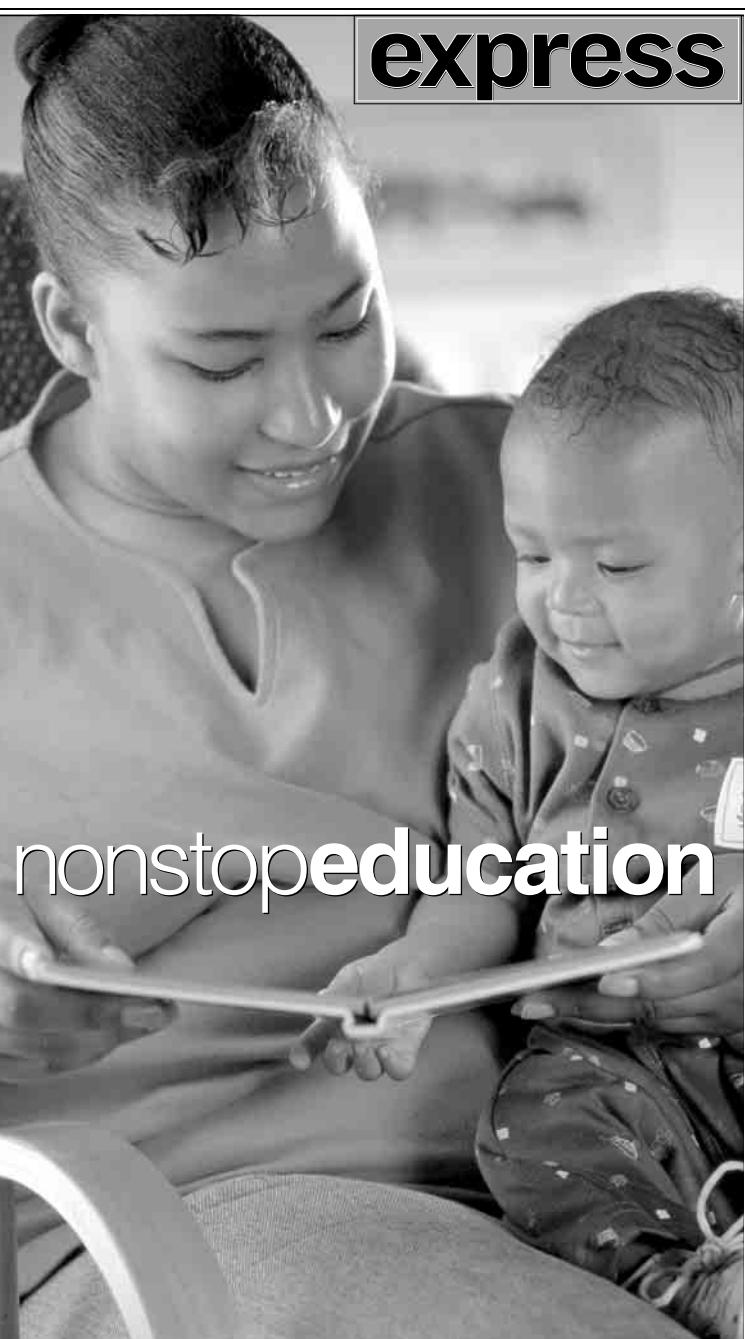
business that never quite knew what to do with her.

9:30 Club, 815 V St. NW; Fri., Dec. 19, 9 p.m., \$35; 703-218-6500. (U St.-Cardozo)



HEADS UP: Gospel-trained and jazz-inflected, smooth soulstress Regina Belle brings her pretty pipes to town. Blues Alley, 1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW; Thu.-Sat., Dec. 18-21, 8 and 10 p.m., \$35; 202-337-4141.

express



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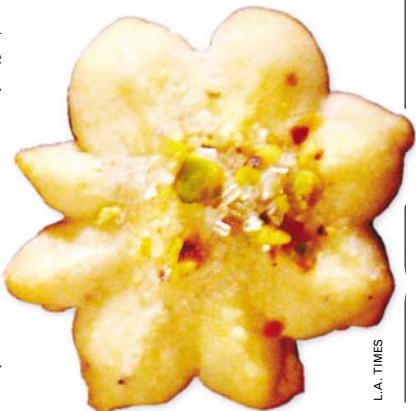
Weekend Pass

Food

Eat, Drink and All That

HOLIDAY | Ever wonder why you don't like eggnog? Chances are you've been drinking the pre-made stuff from a carton (read: gross) and have never had a chance to taste the real thing. This recipe calls for a cooked egg mixture, which minimizes the chance of salmonella entering the conversation. **KIM O'DONNELL** (WASHINGTONPOST.COM)

Chase your eggnog with spicy cardamom cookies.



L.A. TIMES

GENUINE EGGNOG

12 eggs
1 cup sugar
4 cups whole milk
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
nutmeg
4-12 ounces alcohol (optional)

→ Separate 12 eggs. Combine the yolks with 1 cup sugar and mix well with a wooden spoon. The mixture will thicken and turn a pale yellow. Set aside.
→ Measure 4 cups whole milk and place in a saucepan over medium heat. As it comes to a simmer (tiny bubbles rising to the surface), spoon out one ladle's worth of milk into the egg mixture and stir constantly. Watch for the

rise in temperature in the egg bowl; it should begin to feel warm, which is what you want. This process is called tempering; the objective is to bring the temperature of the egg mixture closer to that of the milk to avoid curdling. If you need to add more ladles of milk to warm the bowl, that's fine.
→ Gradually add the egg mixture to the saucepan and stir over low to medium heat. The mixture will begin to

thicken. The goal is a mixture that's approximately 160 degrees and thick enough for a finger streak on the back of your wooden spoon. As you get closer, you may use a whisk, alternating with your spoon, to aerate the mixture. When it has arrived at the desired state, whisk to help bring down the temperature, pour over a strainer and let cool in the bowl in an ice bath.
→ Add vanilla extract (about 1 table-

spoon) if desired, and/or grated nutmeg. This is also the time to add anywhere from 4 to 12 ounces of alcohol—including brandy, rum or bourbon. Of course, this is optional, and virgin eggnog is just as delicious.

→ Cover and chill. Serve in small glasses, either straight up or on the rocks. Makes approx. 2 quarts.

ADAPTED FROM "THE ULTIMATE PARTY DRINK BOOK" BY BRUCE WEINSTEIN.

bine the sparkling sugar and the pistachio nuts, then sprinkle some on each cookie.

→ Bake just until the edges of the cookies start to turn a pale golden color, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the cookies from the baking sheet immediately and cool on a wire rack. The cookies will firm up as they cool. When they are completely cool, store in an airtight container. They may be kept frozen up to two months.

MAKES 5 DOZEN. (L.A.TIMES)



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CARDAMOM SPRITZ COOKIES

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, chilled
1/2 cup superfine sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 egg yolks
2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cardamom seeds, crushed using a mortar and pestle
1/4 cup sparkling decorative sugar
1/4 cup chopped pistachio nuts

→ Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter until smooth. Add the sugar and beat for one minute. Add the vanilla extract and egg yolks and beat an additional minute.

→ Sift together the flour and salt. Spoon the flour mixture into the butter mixture and add the cardamom. Beat on low speed, then increase to medium and mix until the batter is combined.

→ Spoon the dough into a cookie press and press out onto ungreased baking sheets. In a small bowl, com-

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Management

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People

SUPERMODELS

Klum Plans Line of Babies

German supermodel **HEIDI KLUM** is expecting her first child with Flavio



Briatore, managing director of Renault's Formula One team, Klum said Tuesday. Klum, 30, and Briatore, 53, have been together for about a year. "I will take a short maternity leave," Klum told reporters after presenting her new fashion collection. (AP)

ACHIEVEMENTS

Ben Keeps Busy

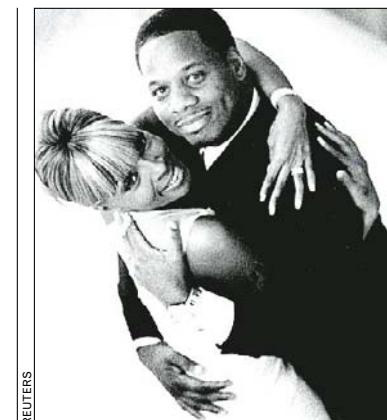
BEN AFFLECK will be the grand marshal at the Daytona 500. The actor and NASCAR fan will begin the Feb. 15 race with the traditional command to the 43-car field: "Gentlemen, start your engines." Affleck is the second movie star in a row to handle grand marshal duties for the race, following John Travolta last year. (AP)



HEY!

That's My Arm

NICOLE KIDMAN thrilled local fans at the Australian premiere of her film "Cold Mountain" Wednesday, shaking hands and signing autographs for eager types who'd waited hours for her arrival. The statuesque Oscar-winner said she was happy to be home and would spend Christmas in Sydney. (AP)



Blige with her new "analytical brain."

WEDDINGS

Blige Finally Complete

MARY J. BLIGE married record producer Kendu Isaacs at her Bergen County, N.J., home on Dec. 7, says People magazine. "He completes me in the areas that I'm weak in. He's an analytical brain. I'm a creative brain. We pray together. We read the Bible together," the 32-year-old singer says on her Web site. "I've never seen a man who loves the Lord like he does." (AP)

CHRISTENINGS

Airport of the Star

Members of legendary American entertainer **BOB HOPE**'s family gathered Wednesday with celeb-

rities and politicians to officially change the name of the Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport to Bob Hope Airport. The comedian had parked his private plane at the air-

field since 1985 and embarked from there on many trips to entertain U.S. troops around the world. The airport handles 5 million passengers a year. (AP)

5 Day Forecast for the Washington Area

Today		Fri.		Sat.		Sun.		Mon.	
Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
42	28	40	28	42	26	44	28	48	36
UV Index (for solar noon) 1 out of 10, minimal	Air Quality Index (AQI) AQI Today: Not available								

All forecasts provided by AccuWeather.com ©2003

Today, partly sunny, windy, cold, a flurry. High 42. Wind mainly west 20-35 mph. Tonight, partly cloudy, brisk, cold. Low 28. Friday, partly sunny, brisk, cold. High 40.

Pollen Index (Yesterday)
Reading: Main offender: Not available

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Letters

TO THE EDITOR

I FIND IT INTRIGUING that people are opposed to Saddam being put to trial under circumstances where execution is a probable outcome ("Iraqis Eager to Try Saddam," Dec. 16). Such opposition is expected of human rights organizations which oppose the death penalty, but get real! The death penalty is common in most Islamic countries. Do they not realize the Western world will be criticized even more if the tribunal is not held in Iraq and not allowed to carry out punishment as seen fit by the people of Iraq?

—TARA SLIFER
Bowie, Md.

IN JAMES W. PINDELL'S recent Live Online column (Dec. 9), he missed the mark by saying he doesn't know of a general election winner who didn't first win in the New Hampshire primary. I suggest he look back on the election wins of George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. The New Hampshire winners were Sen. John McCain (2000) and Sen. Paul Tsongas (1992).

—DENNIS JOHN LEWIS
Washington, D.C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Pindell* actually did note those exceptions but, due to an editing error, they were left out of the Live Online transcript.

WRITE TO EXPRESS

Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Submissions may be edited for space. E-mail to inbox@readexpress.com or mail to Express Letters, PO Box 17370, Arlington, VA 22216.

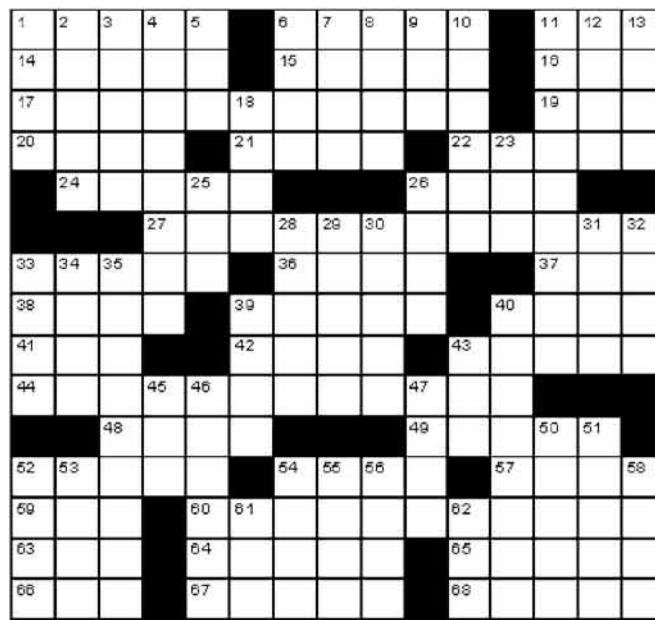
Yesterday's Solution



Crossword Puzzle: Make Oneself Heard | Edited by Timothy E. Parker

ACROSS

- 1 Above water, barely
- 6 Narrow strip
- 11 Semi section
- 14 Cooking or sewing term
- 15 Intense obsession
- 16 Pay stub
- 17 Gasp of admiration
- 19 To the ___ degree
- 20 Eject strongly
- 21 Becomes older
- 22 Turn on a dime
- 24 Defensive effort
- 26 Gala
- 27 Engage in fantasy
- 33 Word with brief or tender
- 36 Majorette, perhaps
- 37 Mrs. Eddie Cantor
- 38 Auction site
- 39 Legendary miniseries
- 40 Cookbook instruction
- 41 Neighbor of Uru.
- 42 Westernmost Aleutian isle
- 43 Floors
- 44 React to a sprained ankle, perhaps
- 48 John ___, the Lone Ranger
- 49 Mubarak's predecessor
- 52 Czech composer Rudolf



- 54 Spanish surrealist
- 57 Popular salad
- 59 Word with parking or odd
- 60 Hosanna
- 63 Street address abbr.
- 64 "Pale Rider," e.g.
- 65 Prepare mushrooms
- 66 Unit-cost word
- 67 Physicist Bohr
- 68 Church areas
- 69 Basic skills
- 70 Distorts
- 71 To date
- 72 Illegal passenger
- 73 Playboy Mansion nickname
- 74 Factory fallout
- 75 Grow dim
- 76 "No ifs, ___ or buts!"
- 77 No-win situation
- 78 Talked nonstop on a subject
- 79 Outwardly curved surface

- 12 Vocal range
- 13 Thai bread
- 18 Dry wash in Africa
- 23 "... Lord, is ___?" (Matt. 26:22)
- 25 Orr's org.
- 26 Ness and co.
- 28 "Rob Roy" author
- 29 Saw feature
- 30 Pause
- 31 Prefix meaning "peculiar"
- 32 Loans to Marc Antony?
- 33 Rachel's sister
- 34 Riverthrough Aragon
- 35 Comic's employee
- 39 Legal invasion
- 40 Golfer's bugaboo
- 43 Hyundai rival
- 45 Moon shuttle
- 46 WWI president
- 47 Seemingly
- 50 How roast is served
- 51 U.S. security
- 52 Letter opener?
- 53 Emulate nomads
- 54 Be fond of
- 55 "The Clan of the Cave Bear" novelist Jean
- 56 PO box contents
- 58 Tar's affirmatives
- 61 "Bali ___"
- 62 Explorer Johnson

The Duplex | Glenn McCoy



Horoscope | Stella Wilder

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — This can be a rewarding day, once you get past a period of frustration resulting from your own indecision. Make a choice and stick with it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — The demands made on your skills and endurance are likely to surprise you. Prepare yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — You may be nearing a dangerous intersection. Only a close friend will warn you of the coming risk. Listen.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Guests may be more opinionated and more unwilling to follow rules you set down than expected. You're the one who must adjust.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — You admire sensitivity in others, but you're not likely to tolerate those who find offense in everything. Be gentle, but don't coddle.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Someone may be pushing your buttons in such a way that you are unable to function properly — particularly under pressure.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) — Things may seem a little artificial and forced; work to return to a more natural and organic manner of doing things.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) — A conflict between the simple and the complex is likely to rage on despite your attempts to get things to meet in the middle. Be patient.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — A personal discovery on your part is likely to open many doors for others as well. Career advancement is certainly in the picture at this time.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Now is the time to make your feelings known in domestic surroundings, where you can take advantage of your considerable support group.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Spend some time talking with others — without dictating the course of the conversation. Let someone else pick the topic.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — There is little danger that your current progress will slow. You can enjoy a new level of involvement during the evening.

LIVE ONLINE

LOTR: 'King'

From washingtonpost.com/liveonline

MICHAEL REGINA, editor in chief of TheOneRing.net, the largest Web site for "The Lord of the Rings," was online Wednesday to discuss "The Return of the King," part three of the epic film series that opened Tuesday.

What do you think of these people dressing up and waiting in line for hours to see midnight showings?

Well ... the word fan comes from fanatic, correct? I think it's great to see fans so excited about these films. One of the biggest disappointments of the late '90s and this decade has been the "Matrix" and "Star Wars" films. Sadly, they have not lived up to the massive hype the fans build it to be. However, it seems "Rings" has worked out well.

Personally, the only time I get dressed in costume is Halloween.

What do you think of the movie's chances at the Oscars next year?

Personally, I think the chances are very good for Peter Jackson to get a best director Oscar. The Academy cannot ignore his huge task in creating these films. As for best picture, the Academy seems to alternate from Hollywood blockbuster to art flick ... so who knows where they'll settle this year?

Will there be a grand finale DVD of some sort that contains all three movies including the extra features or is it safe to go ahead and snag "Towers" now and "King" when it's first released?

I think New Line will be selling the entire box set of all DVDs next year. They've promised us that there will be no "super duper edition" every three years like "Star Wars." The extended editions will be the final editions you will see. If you want to hold on to your money, then wait until late 2004 for this multi-edition DVD set. Something like 24 DVDs, I assume ... huge!

Today on Live Online

NOON: The Post's Peter Slevin discusses the latest developments in U.S. foreign policy.

1:15 P.M.: Columnist Robert Novak discusses his Post Opinion piece about the realistic picture of progress in Iraq.

A large, stylized red brushstroke 'DARCAR' is overlaid on a background of repeating 'DARCARS.com' text. The background is a grid of 20 columns and 20 rows of the website name. The 'DARCAR' text is written in a bold, expressive, and slightly slanted font, with a visible brush texture and varying red tones. The 'D' and 'A' are connected, and the 'R' is a single, long stroke.

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